

Town of Stow

Denise Dembkoski,
Town Administrator

380 Great Road
Stow, MA 01775



Stow Police Department

Michael Sallese,
Police Chief

305 Great Road
Stow, MA 01775



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Media Contact: Kayla Rochon
Phone: 617-993-0003
Email: kayla@jgpr.net

Town of Stow, Stow Police Share Bicycle and Road Safety Tips

STOW — With summer here, Town Administrator Denise Dembkoski and Police Chief Michael Sallese, along with the Town of Stow and the Stow Police Department, would like to remind residents of bicycle safety tips.

According to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#), 938 bicyclists died in traffic accidents in 2020, accounting for 2.4 percent of all traffic fatalities. NHTSA estimates show a 5 percent increase in bicyclist fatalities in 2021.

In Massachusetts, a new Vulnerable User Law went into effect on April 1, 2023. This law is designed to ensure that automobile operators and bicyclists share the roadway safely.

The law requires drivers to provide a safe passing distance of at least 4 feet when passing vulnerable road users. Those users are defined as pedestrians; bicyclists; roadside workers; those using wheelchairs, motorized bicycles, scooters, skateboards, roller skates, and other micromobility devices; those operating farm equipment or horse-drawn carriages; and horse riders.

The law applies to all roadways. Drivers are allowed to cross a double yellow line to adhere to the law.

Bicyclists are now required to use a front white light and rear red light and rear reflector when riding at night.

The Town of Stow and Stow Police would like to share the following tips from the [National Safety Council](#):

For vehicle drivers

- Vehicle drivers can help keep bicyclists safe by always checking over their left shoulder before opening their car door. This can help avoid collisions between bikes and car doors.
- Vehicle drivers should also remain aware of their surroundings while driving, paying special attention to bicyclists, pedestrians, and other vehicles. Safe riding requires cooperation from all road users.
- Check all mirrors and blind spots before changing lanes or merging and allow more distance when driving behind a motorcycle.
- Before entering traffic, stop and look left, right, left again and over your shoulder.

Plan to be seen

- Wear neon, fluorescent, or other bright clothing
- Whenever possible, ride during the day
- If you must ride at night, wear reflective clothing, and use flashing lights

Follow the rules of the road

- Bicyclists must follow the same rules as motorists. Get acquainted with traffic laws.
- Ride single file in the direction of traffic
- Remain alert, keep your head up and look around; watch for opening car doors and other hazards
- Use hand signals when turning and use extra care at intersections
- Never hitch onto cars
- Before entering traffic, stop and look left, right, left again and over your shoulder

Wear a helmet at all times

Adult riders and children should wear a helmet certified by the [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#). To ensure a helmet fits properly:

- Adjust sizing pads or fit ring until the helmet is snug
- Position the helmet level on your head, covering the forehead and not tipped backward or forward; this will be about one to two finger widths above the eyebrow
- Adjust the side straps so they form a “V” shape under and slightly in front of your ears
- Center the buckle on the chin strap under your chin
- Buckle and tighten the chin strap until it is snug; no more than one to two fingers should be able to fit between the chin and strap
- When fitted, the helmet should not rock more than 1 inch side to side or front to back on your head

Always check your equipment before riding:

- The seat should be adjusted to the proper height and locked in place
- Make certain all parts are secure and working properly
- Check that the tires are inflated properly
- Make sure the bike is equipped with reflectors on the rear, front, pedals, and spokes
- A horn or bell, a rear-view mirror and a bright headlight also are recommended

For more information on bicycle safety, [click here](#).

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SHARING THE ROAD



For bike riders

- Follow the rules of the road and remain alert at all times.
- Inspect your bike prior to a ride, including the tires.
- Wear neon/bright clothing. Install lights and reflectors or night cycling.
- Always wear a helmet, and make sure it fits properly.



For motorists

- Remember, bike riders have the same rights as drivers.
- Watch for bikes when in parking lots, at stop signs, and when turning or parking.
- Always obey the speed limit and all posted signage.
- Allow cyclists at least 4 feet when passing.

Information courtesy the National Safety Council and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

A message from the Town of Stow and the Stow Police
Department

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John Guilfoil Public Relations LLC
8 Prospect St.
Georgetown, MA 01833
617-993-0003